

his hind legs and barked, I still would have voted for him.

Wilderness preservation and the plight of the homeless are not issues that pay a big political bonus. You become a wilderness advocate and you're going to be hung in effigy and yelled at by large men in plaid shirts. Homeless people tend not to turn out in numbers at the polls.

But Mr. Vento applied himself to the issues he cared about, did his homework, made the rounds of his colleagues, carried the water, dug the ditches, fought the good fight, made the compromises, and wrote the landmark legislation that became law and that made a real difference in the world. And I'm not sure how many of us in St. Paul are aware of this.

There have been only three congressmen from St. Paul in my memory, and that covers 50 years. Gene McCarthy, Joe Karth, Bruce Vento—all DFLers, all good men and all of them got to Congress on the strength of yellow-dog Democrats like me. They got re-elected simply by doing their job, representing working people, speaking the conscience of the Democratic Party, and applying themselves to the nuts and bolts of Congress.

A political party serves a big function that TV or newspapers can't. It pulls in idealistic young people, puts them to work in the cause, trains them, seasons them, and gives the talented and the diligent a chance to rise. If it can produce a Bruce Vento, then a party has reason to exist, and if it can't, then it doesn't. Simple as that. Then it fades, as the DFL has.

People say it's inevitable for political parties to fade, part of the loss of the sense of community, blah blah blah, that people are cynical about politics and more interested in lifestyle and media and so forth, but we are poorer for the loss of parties and the devaluation of endorsement.

Bruce Vento never could've gotten elected in a media-driven campaign, the sort in which high-priced consultants and media buyers spend 15 million bucks to make the candidate into a beautiful illusion.

Mr. Vento is the wrong man for that kind of politics. His eyebrows are too big; he isn't cool enough. He is a modest and principled and hard-working guy, but you couldn't put this over in a 30-second commercial. He managed to get to Congress because there was a strong DFL party that endorsed him, and so voters like me pulled the lever and gave Mr. Vento the wherewithal to be a great congressman. Which he, being a true East Sider, never told us he was. But which I now think he was.

Unknowingly, we did something great in sending him there. And our partisan loyalty gave him the freedom to take on thankless tasks, like protecting wilderness and dealing with the homeless.

I sat in the back at Mr. Vento's dinner and thought what a shock it is when you realize that the country is in the hands of people your own age. You go along for years thinking it's being run by jowly old guys in baggy suits and then you see that the jowly old guys are people you went to school with.

Mr. Vento is about my age, and I feel for him. He is fighting lung cancer and it has taken its toll on him. He looks haggard but game.

His three boys were at the dinner in Washington, and their wives, and the event felt like a real valedictory. If Mr. Vento had wanted to make us all cry into our pudding, it wouldn't have taken much.

But he was upbeat and talking about the future and about national parks and the de-

coding of the human genome and saying, "All we need to do is take this new knowledge and apply it to public policy," and thanking everybody and grinning, and you had to admire him for his command of the occasion.

A man who is desperately ill and on his way out of public life stages a dinner that raises money for a scholarship fund for teachers. Bruce Vento is a man of great bravery and devotion and foresight who represented us nobly in Congress, whether we knew it or not.

Mr. GEPHARDT. Mr. Speaker, today, we say goodbye to a good friend and colleague, Bruce Vento.

Bruce was a humanitarian in every sense of the word.

He called environmental issues his one "true passion" and he pursued that passion in a way that lifted up all Americans.

He was a strong leader in the Committee on Resources with a keen understanding of environmental issues.

He worked to protect and strengthen America's national treasures—our urban parks, our public lands, and other public resources, and he fought for tropical rain forests and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

He believed in making our country not just a wealthy country but a beautiful country, marked by forests, rivers, mountains and streams that all American could visit and enjoy.

Bruce was "a hero" who had "done more for parks than anyone I know," one of his fans said of him.

Bruce was also special because he cared so very deeply about all people and the sanctity of the places in which they lived.

He earned a reputation as a strong advocate for the homeless, and it was well-deserved. He tried to lift people up through better housing and emergency shelter, a powerful reminder that this country should not leave behind anyone.

Bruce spend the last decade working for the Hmong people who fought on the side of the United States in the war in Vietnam, and who were trying to become citizens of our country.

He was also a tireless advocate for consumer protections as a senior member of the Banking and Financial Services Committee.

A strong voice for his constituents, a beloved son of the state of Minnesota, Bruce represented that state's 4th district with dedication and commitment to his party and to the people he represented.

Bruce and I entered Congress in the same year and my journey through this institution is bound with Bruce's journey. I am proud to say that I had a wonderful colleague, a good friend, and a man who will be sorely missed not just by me, but by a nation that prides itself on a commitment to democratic values, a safe environment and humane treatment for every American.

We will miss you Bruce.

Mr. LAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart as the House pays tribute to the distinguished work of our friend and colleague, Bruce Vento.

It is appropriate that we recognize his lifelong work as a champion of the homeless by renaming the "Stewart B. McKinney Act" the "McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act."

In 1987, it was Bruce who led the efforts to enact a comprehensive homeless assistance program, named after his late colleague and friend, Stewart McKinney, then the Ranking Republican on the Housing Subcommittee.

I am privileged to have worked closely with Bruce over the last several years, in particular, on homeless reform legislation designed to focus efforts on permanent housing and the hope of ending homelessness forever. As the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, I have known no other that has been more sincerely dedicated to the problems associated with homelessness and families in need of affordable housing. He will be missed.

Life is fleeting, for us all. But what we do while we are here can affect so many and have such a lasting impact. Bruce's tireless work has made and will continue to make a real difference in countless lives of those less fortunate.

Mr. LAFALCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TANCREDI). Without objection, the previous question is ordered.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, was read a third time, passed, and the motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 5417.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Iowa?

There was no objection.

MODIFYING RATES RELATING TO REDUCED RATE MAIL MATTER

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take from the Speaker's table the Senate bill (S. 2686) to amend chapter 36 of title 39, United States Code, to modify rates relating to reduced rate mail matter, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the Senate bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH) to explain his request.

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, I will try to be very brief, but I do think it is important to put out for the RECORD a few comments about this bill. It is a privilege. The Senate passed this legislation on October 6, and it was sponsored in the other